

SUPERFUND

Here are some of the major events that have contributed to the creation and evolution of EPA's Superfund program.

1976

Responding to public concern over “midnight dumping” of toxic wastes, Congress establishes authority for controls over hazardous waste from generation to disposal under the **Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)**.

Congress enacts the **Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA)**, which provides EPA with authority to protect public health and the environment through controls on toxic chemicals that pose an unreasonable risk of injury.

1977

A spark from a welder's torch touches off a **series of chemical reactions that ignite a large chemical-waste treatment facility in Bridgeport, New Jersey** leaving six dead and hospitalizing 35. It is reported that, “the raging fire propels waste drums through the air and blankets the city in a funnel of black smoke that reaches hundreds of feet into the sky.”

1978

President Carter declares a **State of Emergency at Love Canal, New York** after a startling increase in skin rashes, miscarriages, and birth defects. Love Canal heightens public awareness of the grave and imminent perils of unregulated hazardous waste dumping in communities.

1979

House and Senate committees hold extensive hearings on the dangers posed by toxic waste dumps and major bills are introduced to create a “superfund” for dealing with these dangers in both houses of Congress.



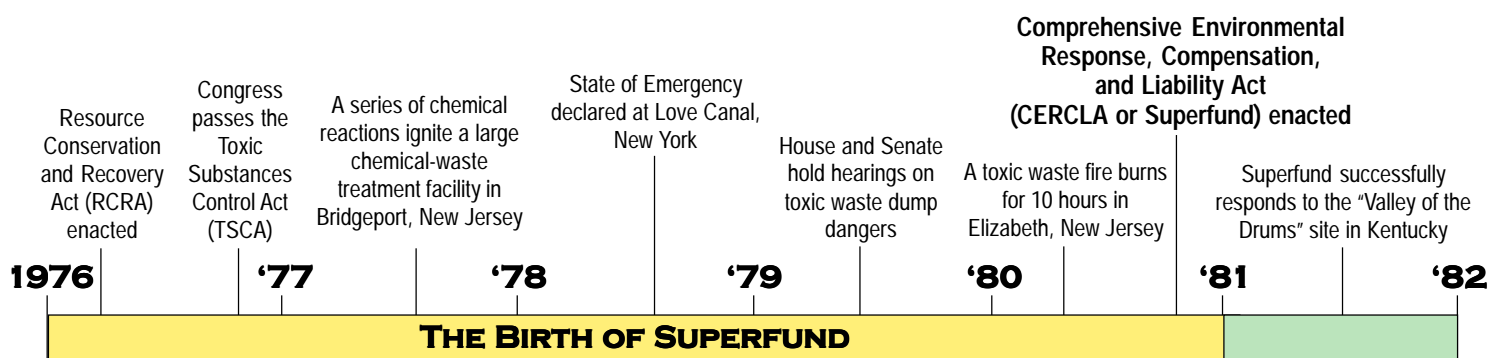
1980

Toxic waste bursts into flames at a waste storage facility in Elizabeth, NJ sending a thick black plume of smoke and ash over a 15 mile area and raising fears of widespread chemical contamination. The fire burns for 10 hours as State officials issue an environmental advisory closing schools and urging residents to close all doors and windows and remain indoors.

Congress passes the **Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA or Superfund)** to address the dangers of abandoned or uncontrolled hazardous waste dumps by developing a nationwide program for: emergency response; information gathering and analysis; liability for responsible parties; and site cleanup. CERCLA also creates a Trust Fund (or “Superfund”) to finance emergency responses and cleanups.

1981

Superfund successfully responds to the “Valley of the Drums” site in Kentucky drawing national attention as EPA acts on behalf of public safety by removing over 4,000 drums and installing protective measures.



TIME LINE

1982

EPA publishes the **Hazard Ranking System (HRS)** as the **principal mechanism for evaluating environmental hazards of a site**. HRS is a numerically based screening system that uses information from preliminary investigations to assess the potential threats that sites pose to human health or the environment.

EPA reaches the **first major CERCLA multi-generator settlement**, where the parties implemented the cleanup. The settlement involved the South Carolina Recycling and Disposal, Inc. site (a.k.a. "Bluff Road").

EPA issues **first national guidelines for implementing CERCLA in its revised National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP)**. The NCP sets forth the procedures that must be followed by EPA and private parties in emergency responses and cleanups.

A landfill protest in Warren County, North Carolina raises new concerns over the unequal distribution of environmental threats in disadvantaged and minority communities, fostering the **birth of the environmental justice movement**.

1983

Using the HRS screening system, **EPA creates the first National Priorities List (NPL)**, classifying 406 sites as the nation's priorities for cleanup under Superfund. Only sites on the NPL may qualify for long-term remedial actions financed by the Superfund. The NPL is updated on a regular basis.

EPA **relocates more than 500 residents of the town of Times Beach, Missouri** – and the entire town is closed down – because of widespread dioxin contamination.

1984

Concerns about gasoline and hazardous chemicals seeping from storage tanks and landfills into underground drinking supplies prompt Congress to enact the **Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments** to RCRA under which EPA makes efforts to prevent such contamination and requires the treatment of hazardous waste prior to land disposal.

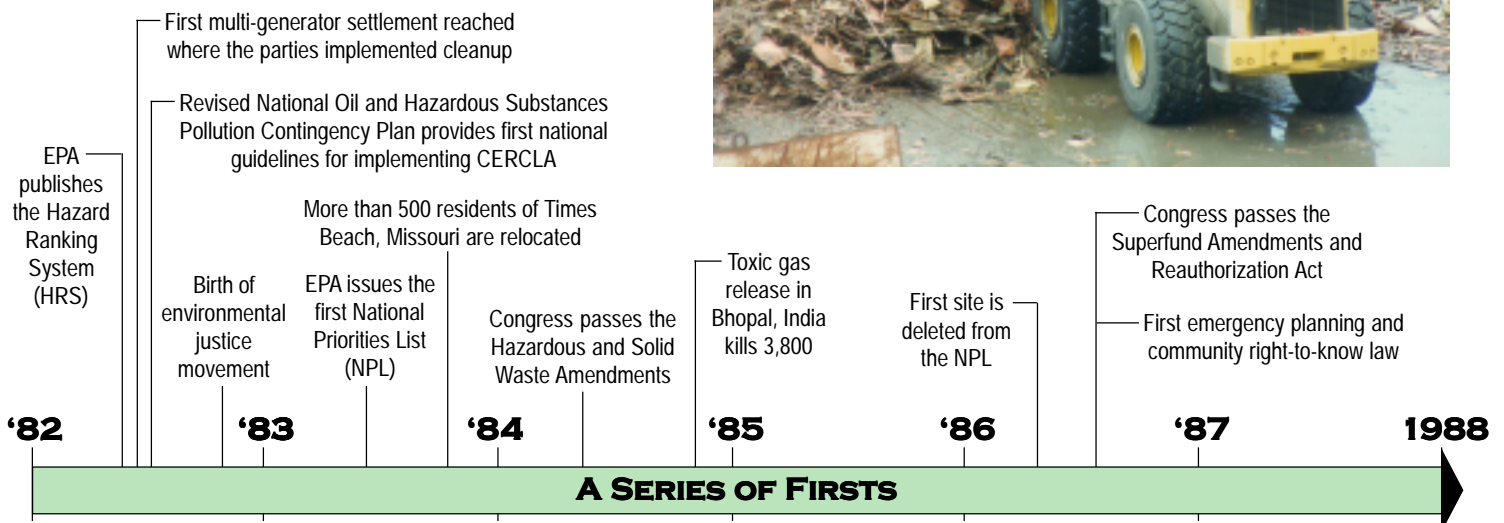
A **toxic gas release in Bhopal, India kills 3,800** raising public concern about explosions and leaks of toxic chemicals. This incident led to the passage of the first community right-to-know law under the 1986 Superfund Amendments.

1986

The Friedman Property site in New Jersey becomes the **first site deleted from the final NPL**.

Congress passes the **Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA)**, which in part: strengthened CERCLA's enforcement provisions; encouraged voluntary settlements instead of litigation; stressed the importance of permanent remedies and innovative treatment technologies; increased State involvement in every phase of the Superfund program; increased the focus on human health problems posed by hazardous waste sites; and encouraged greater citizen participation in how sites are cleaned up.

SARA also contains the **first emergency planning and community right-to-know law** requiring public records of chemicals managed at a facility, and providing EPA with the authority to work with States and localities to prevent accidents and develop emergency plans in case of dangerous releases of chemicals.



1989

EPA conducts a **“90-Day Study” Management Review of the Superfund Program**. Recommendations resulting from the study include the need to focus on enforcement first and to foster the use of innovative technologies. The Study is the first in a series of evaluations by EPA to examine ways to improve Superfund.

The **Exxon Valdez spills 11 million gallons of crude oil** into Alaska’s Prince William Sound, raising public consciousness for both Superfund and oil spill planning and response.

EPA initiates **“Enforcement First”** policy where EPA gives first priority to finding the parties who are potentially responsible for a release and gets them to address the problem they created.

1990

Congress enacts the **Oil Pollution Act**, establishing a tax-based compensation trust fund and makes the costs of pollution cleanup the responsibility of the oil handling industry.

Congress passes the **Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act** to ensure a fair process for closing military bases, including those on the NPL.

EPA revises the Hazard Ranking System in accordance with SARA to help ensure the HRS accurately assesses the relative degree of risk to human health and the environment posed by uncontrolled hazardous waste sites that may be placed on the NPL.

EPA expands the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan in accordance with SARA to provide for broader response actions, increased State and public involvement, and stronger enforcement procedures.

Congress passes the **Pollution Prevention Act** establishing pollution prevention as national policy and encouraging industries and academics to devise novel technologies and processes that avoid the formation and/or use of hazardous substances.



1991

An EPA task force’s **“30-Day Study”** proposes initiatives for accelerating the rate of cleanups and improving how the risks at hazardous waste sites are evaluated.

1992

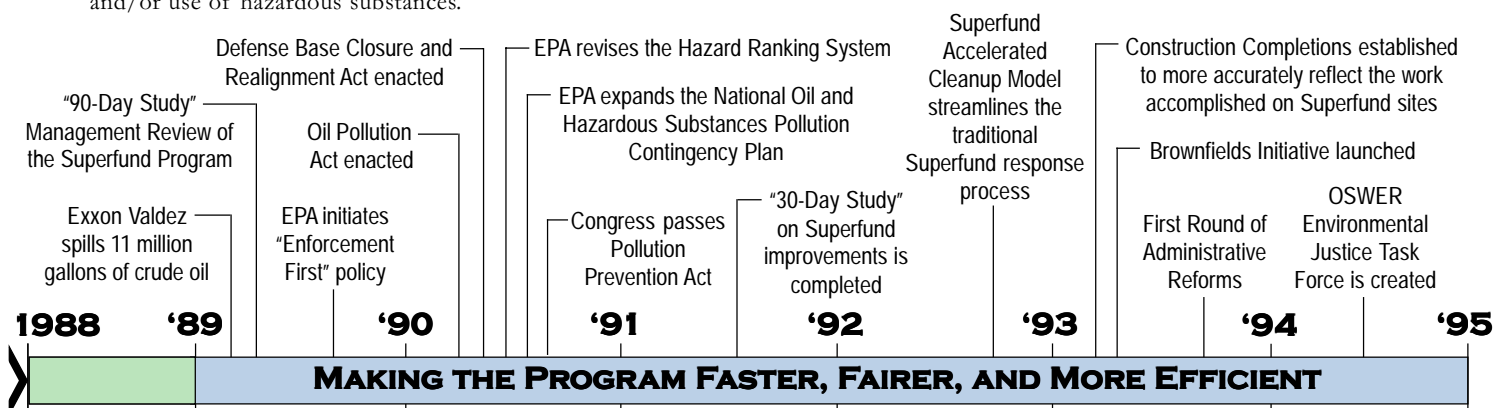
EPA issues the **Superfund Accelerated Cleanup Model (SACM)** to streamline the traditional Superfund response process by providing prompt reduction in risk and an earlier initiation of enforcement and public participation activities.

1993

EPA establishes **Construction Completions** as a new way to more accurately reflect the work accomplished on Superfund sites. These are sites where all construction is complete and the site is awaiting official deletion from the NPL.

The **Brownfields Initiative** is launched to redevelop abandoned, idle, or underused industrial and commercial sites when expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination.

EPA issues its **First Round of Administrative Reforms** designed to enhance enforcement fairness, reduce transaction costs, enhance cleanup effectiveness and consistency, and enhance public involvement and State participation.



TIME LINE

1994

The **OSWER Environmental Justice Task Force** is created to address concerns over the unequal distribution of environmental threats in disadvantaged and minority communities in EPA's waste programs.

1995

EPA launches the **Brownfields Action Agenda**, which outlines four activities to help States and communities implement and realize the benefits of the Brownfields Program: seed money through pilots; clarifying liability issues; encouraging partnerships and outreach; and supporting job development and training.

Building on the momentum of the First Round of Administrative Reforms, EPA announces the **Second Round of Administrative Reforms** with an emphasis on enforcement, economic development, community involvement and outreach, environmental justice, consistent program implementation, and State empowerment.

Later in 1995, EPA launches a **Third Round of Administrative Reforms**, in an effort to strengthen the Superfund Program based on three principles: selecting remedies that are cost effective and protective; reducing litigation by achieving common ground instead of conflict; and ensuring that States and communities stay more informed and involved in cleanup decisions.

Superfund's emergency response program expands to address terrorist acts following the bombing of a Federal building in Oklahoma City, killing 168. Today, Superfund assists nationwide efforts to prevent and prepare for domestic chemical, biological, and nuclear terrorist acts.

1996

Cumulative Superfund cost recovery settlements exceed \$2 billion. Over 20 percent secured in 1996 alone. This landmark accomplishment demonstrates EPA's commitment under the Superfund Reforms to promote enforcement settlements so responsible parties pay for cleanups.

1997

EPA launches the **Brownfields National Partnership**, linking the efforts of more than 25 organizations and Federal agencies. Together, the partners make over 100 commitments, which total \$300 million in Federal government investment, to assist cleanup and redevelopment efforts for as many as 5,000 abandoned or underutilized properties.

1998

EPA completes its **5,000th emergency removal action** at the Great Lakes Container site in Missouri, a milestone in Superfund Program achievement.

1999

EPA announces the **Superfund Redevelopment Initiative**, a coordinated national program providing communities with the tools and information needed to turn cleaned up Superfund sites into productive assets like office parks, playing fields, wetlands, and residential areas.

2000

EPA achieves its **700th Construction Completion** at the Ralph Grey Trucking Co. site in California.

Brownfields Initiative receives Harvard University's Innovations in Government Award, the highest honor to government programs that serve the public. Sponsored by the John F. Kennedy School of Government, the award celebrates EPA's effort to clean up abandoned, underutilized sites and restore them to productive community use.

20th Anniversary of Superfund

